

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	MDU Temporary Storage Area
Proposed Implementation Date:	2014-2016
Proponent:	Montana Dakota Utilities
Location:	Sec 36, T9N-R58E
County:	Fallon County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Montana Dakota Utilities (henceforth referred to as proponent) has contacted the DNRC Eastern Land Office requesting a land use license for the purpose of creating a temporary storage area on the tract of state land mentioned above. The proponent has submitted a form DS-401 along with the application fee. The area requested is within and immediately around the existing Monarch Compressor Station Facility.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The selection of this tract of state trust land as a potential temporary storage area is due to the immediate access to an all weather road and the related infrastructure at the Monarch Compressor Station. A field inspection of the site was conducted on December 18, 2013. The time of use requested by the proponent is a term of 2 years beginning in 2014 and ending in 2016.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant a land use license to the proponent for the purpose of creating a temporary storage area on the tract of state trust land mentioned above

Alternative B- No Action

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Alternative A- Minimal soil disturbance should take place in the area of construction. The expected disturbance would come from vehicles unloading, organizing and loading materials on the site. The soil composition is a Clay/Dense Clay complex. The area of the proposed storage area has previously been disturbed when the Monarch Compressor Station was built.

Alternative B- No Impact.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Alternative A- Minimal impacts could be expected to local ambient air-quality. This impact would be produced through fugitive dust due to slightly increased traffic to the site. Fugitive dust would be controlled through applying water to the access roads. Impact from construction would be temporary and should not result in significant impacts in air quality.

Alternative B- No Impact

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Alternative A- Potential disruption to the vegetative community within the area of construction could be expected. This disruption would come in the action of storing materials on top of existing vegetation. Current plant species which occupy the construction area include Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Crested Wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria pyramidata*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Fringed Sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), Broom Snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese Brome (*Bromus japonicus*). Approximately 50% of the requested area is located within the developed gravel yard of the facility so no vegetation impacts are expected in that area. If significant impacts to the vegetation are noted upon termination of the use of this site, the proponent will be required to reseed the area to a native grass mixture. The proponent will be required to monitor and address any potential noxious weed infestations.

Alternative B- No Impact

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Alternative A- This project may temporarily disrupt wildlife habitat for a number of species. Species which may have habitat in the area of the project may include but are not limited to deer, antelope, rodents, coyotes, foxes, amphibians, raptors, migratory and prairie birds. Upon project completion habitats and wildlife utilization should return to normal levels.

Alternative B- No Impact

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Alternative A- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program noted two Greater Sage Grouse leks in the general area of the project. These leks are located approximately 1.5 miles away from the proposed project area. Due to the small scope of the project and distance from the leks no significant impacts are expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Alternative A- No cultural archeological or paleontological resources have been noted within the scope of the requested license area. Should any such resources be discovered during the construction of this project, licensing requires termination of activities as well as a mandate to immediately notify both the DNRC Staff Archeologist and the State Historical Preservation Officer.

Alternative B- No Impact

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Alternative A- Alteration of the viewshed may occur during the use of the licensed area. The mentioned tracts of land are visible from the Fallon County Anticline Road. Construction is not planned on any prominent features. No above ground permanent structures are included within the land use license request. Noise levels may also be slightly increased during the use of the storage yard. Any increase to noise levels would be minimal and temporary. Impacts to aesthetics should be minimal in nature due to previous disturbance and existing infrastructure on the tract.

Alternative B- No Impact

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Alternative A- No limited natural resources should be required in addition to that which is stated within the proposed license.

Alternative B- No Impact

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain *POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS* following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Alternative A- There may be potential health and safety risks associated with this project. These risks are accepted by trained employees as occupational risks. These risks can be mitigated with proper training and on site safety protocols.

Alternative B- No Impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Alternative A- This proposed project should have a long term positive effect on industrial and commercial activities through increasing demand for supplies and services within the local communities. Impacts to agricultural uses should be very minimal and temporary

Alternative B- No Impact

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

Alternative A- This project has the potential to create jobs with further development possibilities. The number of jobs created is unknown at this time.

Alternative B- No Impact

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Alternative A- This project has the potential to increase local tax revenues the amount of which is unknown at this time.

Alternative B- No impact.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Alternative A- Traffic levels could increase slightly during the use of the storage area. This increase should only be temporary

Alternative B- No Impact

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Alternative A- There is no noted adopted environmental plans or goals within the boundary of the license requested.

Alternative B- No Impact

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Alternative A- This proposed project and land use license request should have only a minimal effect on access to recreational and wilderness activities as the requested storage area is located in and adjacent to the existing compressor station facility.

Alternative B- No Impact

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Alternative A- No impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Alternative A- This project would require the purchase of a land use license across this tract of Trust Land. The price of the license will be set at \$250.00 per acre per year. Estimated return to the trust would be \$1000.00.

Alternative B- Additional revenue to the trust through the sale of a land use license would not be realized.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 12-26-2013
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested land use license state owned trust lands for the proposed MDU temporary storage area project should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures addressed in the environmental analysis checklist as well as site specific land use license terms and stipulations. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through stipulations of the license. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS

 ☐ More Detailed EA

 ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Marc A. Aberg
	Title: Eastern Land Office; Land Program Manager
Signature: /S/ Marc A. Aberg	Date: 12-26-2013